

NOTIONS OF WILDERNESS

1784: Daniel Boone's "autobiography" (mostly written by another Kentuckian) condemns wild country but also praises the scenery of nature.

1760s



For two centuries the New World's "howling" wilderness was seen only as an oppressive wasteland in need of taming by frontiersmen like Daniel Boone and then settlement by pioneers and farmers.

1854: Henry David Thoreau writes *Walden*, a reflection on simple living in natural surroundings.

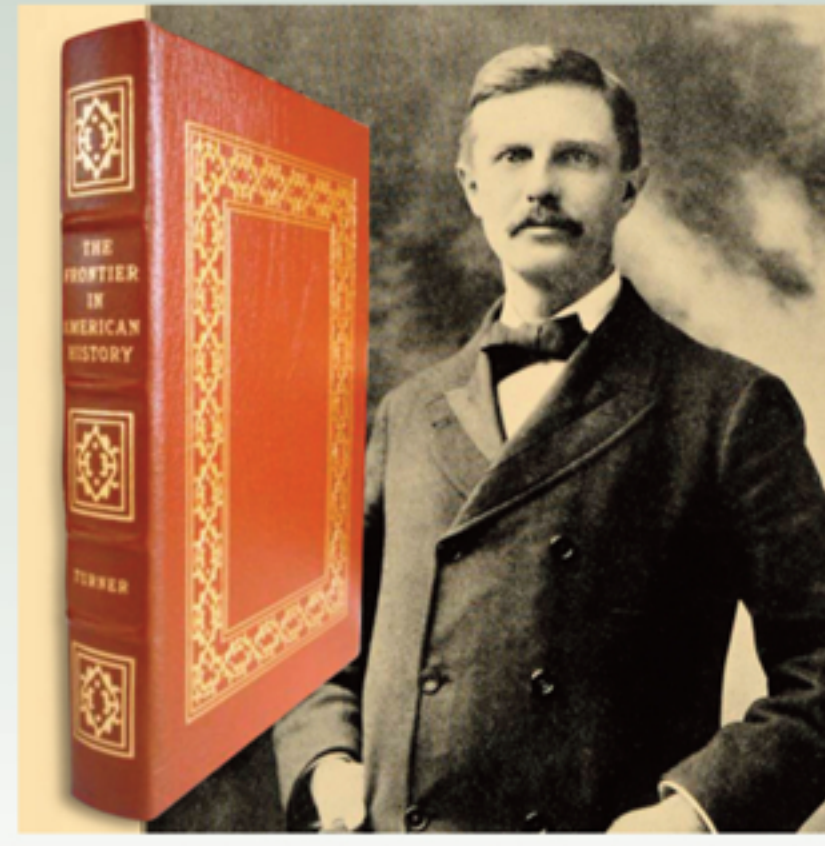
1860s and '70s



Outright hostility toward wilderness began to soften as Romantic painters like Thomas Moran depicted unspoiled nature not as godless deserts but as awe-inspiring expressions of divinity.

1872: Yellowstone National Park Act passes.

1890s



In his "Frontier Thesis," historian Frederick Jackson Turner argues that taming and interaction with wilderness were essential in forming the unique American character and democracy.

1890: U.S. Census reports that the nation contains no more uninhabited areas, signaling to many the end of America's frontier era.

1892: Sierra Club founded. John Muir is named president.

1890s



The Industrial Revolution, urban life, and an increasingly mechanized society pushed people farther and farther from their agrarian roots. A growing number began to seek out natural lands as places of solace and restoration.

1906: Antiquities Act passes, allowing the government to restrict certain uses on federal lands.

1900s and '10s



Theodore Roosevelt respected the preservationist philosophy of his friend John Muir, but he also saw value in the utilitarian perspective of conservation that allowed for logging, mining, and other uses.

1913: Hetch Hechy Valley in Yosemite is dammed. Though a loss for preservation, it helped galvanize the movement.

1920s and '30s



Born of a wealthy New York family, Bob Marshall argued persuasively throughout the 1930s—until his untimely death at age 38—to have portions of the national forest system designated as roadless areas.

1935: The Wilderness Society is founded by Bob Marshall, Aldo Leopold, and others to advocate for wilderness protection.

1930s and '40s



Ansel Adams and other artists brought to the public's attention the grandeur of Yosemite, the Sierras, and other untamed lands, reinforcing growing sentiment for protecting the nation's remaining wilderness areas.

1949: A year after his death, Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* is published, clarifying his "land ethic" and principles of ecology.

1955: Wilderness advocates avenge Hetch Hechy by defeating the proposed Echo Park Dam at Dinosaur National Monument.

1950s



Facing suburban sprawl and the threat of nuclear annihilation in the 1950s and '60s, a growing number of Americans turned to wilderness as places to escape and recreate.

1956: Sigurd Olsen publishes *The Singing Wilderness*, popularizing the wild canoe country along the Minnesota-Ontario border.

1950s and '60s



Pennsylvanian Howard Zahniser, head of The Wilderness Society for 20 years, was the main proponent of the Wilderness Act, which he first wrote in 1956.

1964: Wilderness Act passed.

1970s and '80s



After nine congressional hearings, 6,000 pages of public testimony, and 66 revisions, the Wilderness Act is signed by President Johnson on September 3, 1964.

1976: National Forest Management Act passed.

1980: Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act passed, adding 56 million acres of wilderness to the system.

1990s and '00s



The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 added two million acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System, mostly in Idaho, Oregon, and California.

1983: Lee Metcalf Wilderness added to southwestern Montana.

2009: Omnibus Public Land Management Act passed.

TODAY



Many Montanans support designation of new wilderness in Montana. Currently two bills are before Congress that would add the first new wilderness acreage to the state since 1983.